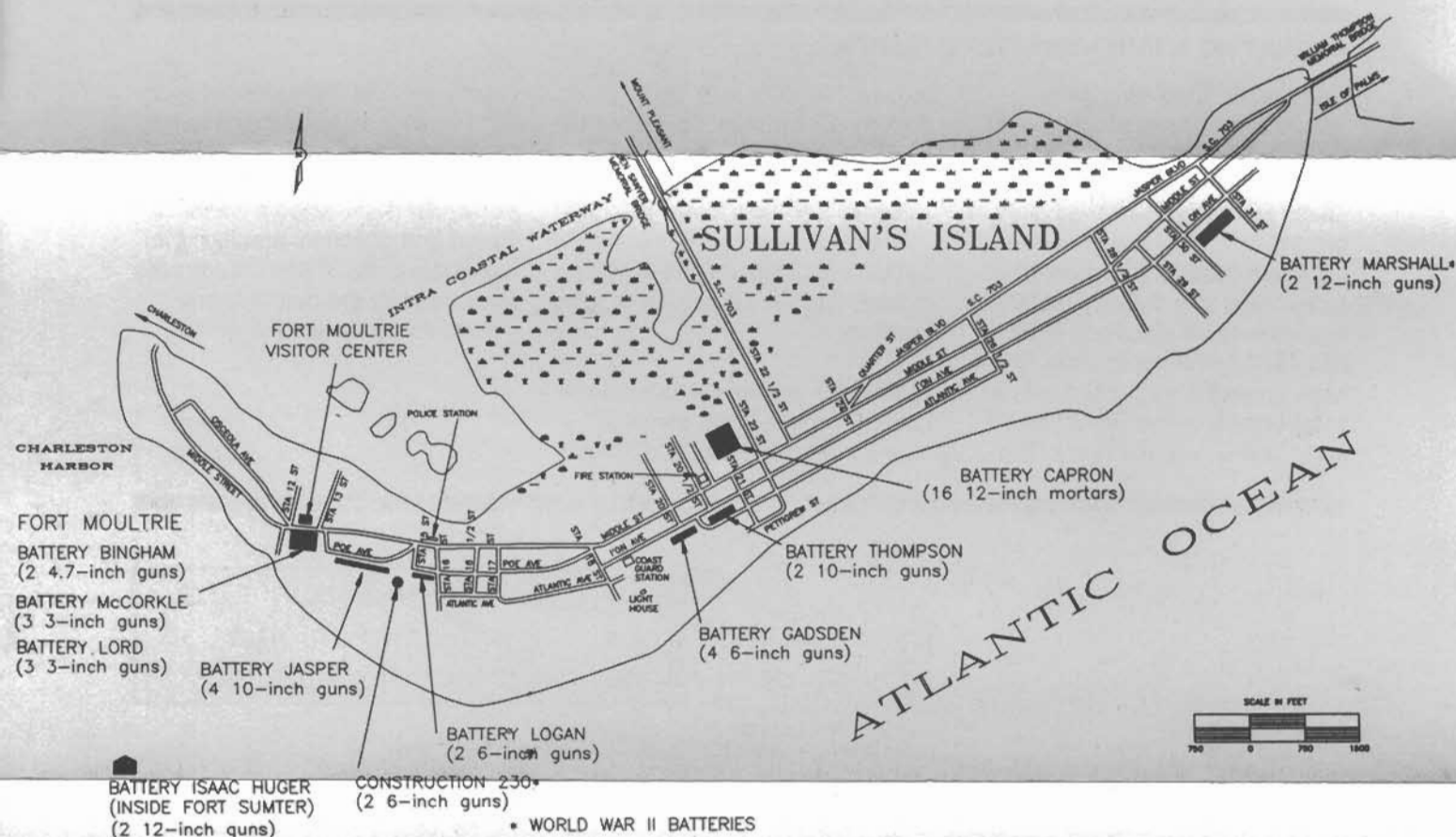


Fort Moultrie

Fort Sumter National Monument
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Battery Jasper



For your safety, please follow signage instructions and do not cross barriers. Some of the historic batteries are now private property. Please respect the privacy of others.

THE ENDICOTT SYSTEM

In the decades following the Civil War, America's coastal defenses deteriorated as the nation, weary of war, devoted its energies and resources to more peaceful pursuits.

However, other nations were building steam-driven, ironclad fleets armed with formidable steel guns. By the 1880s the American public realized that their country

could no longer adequately defend itself against foreign naval attack.

In 1885 President Grover Cleveland appointed a board chaired by Secretary of War, William C. Endicott, to examine the state of America's coastal defenses and to suggest improvements.

The board's report, issued the following year, recommended the

rearmament of 26 sites along the coast and three sites on the Great Lakes.

This new generation of seacoast defense became known as the Endicott System. It featured breachloading steel cannon on "disappearing" carriages, powerful mortar batteries, underwater electronic minefields and rapid fire guns to protect the minefields.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Funding for the new system was slow at first. Not until the threat of war with Spain in 1896 did Congress allocate sufficient funds to implement the system. In Charleston, work on the Endicott System began in March 1896, with the construction of Mortar Battery Capron.

One year later, construction began on Battery Jasper, a 10-inch disappearing gun emplacement located just east of Fort Moultrie. These two batteries, plus a minefield at the mouth of the harbor were Charleston's only defense when America declared war on Spain in April, 1898.

Although the war ended in just three months, construction of the Endicott System continued. Between 1898 and 1906, one 12-inch battery (Huger) was built on Fort Sumter, and six additional batteries were constructed on Sullivan's Island.

BATTERY JASPER

Battery Jasper was completed in 1898 at a cost of \$235,000. Each of the battery's four guns could fire a 571 pound shell a distance of 8.5 miles. Each gun was mounted on a "disappearing" carriage which upon recoil, lowered it behind a protective, 80 foot thick embank-

ment where it could be safely serviced and reloaded.

A 55-ton counter-weight returned it to the firing position. Though it took 43 men to load and fire a gun, a skilled crew could aim and fire it every 30 seconds.

Battery Jasper was never tested in battle. In 1943 it was taken out of service and each of its 65,000 pound steel guns were scrapped for the war effort.

OPERATING A GUN AT BATTERY JASPER

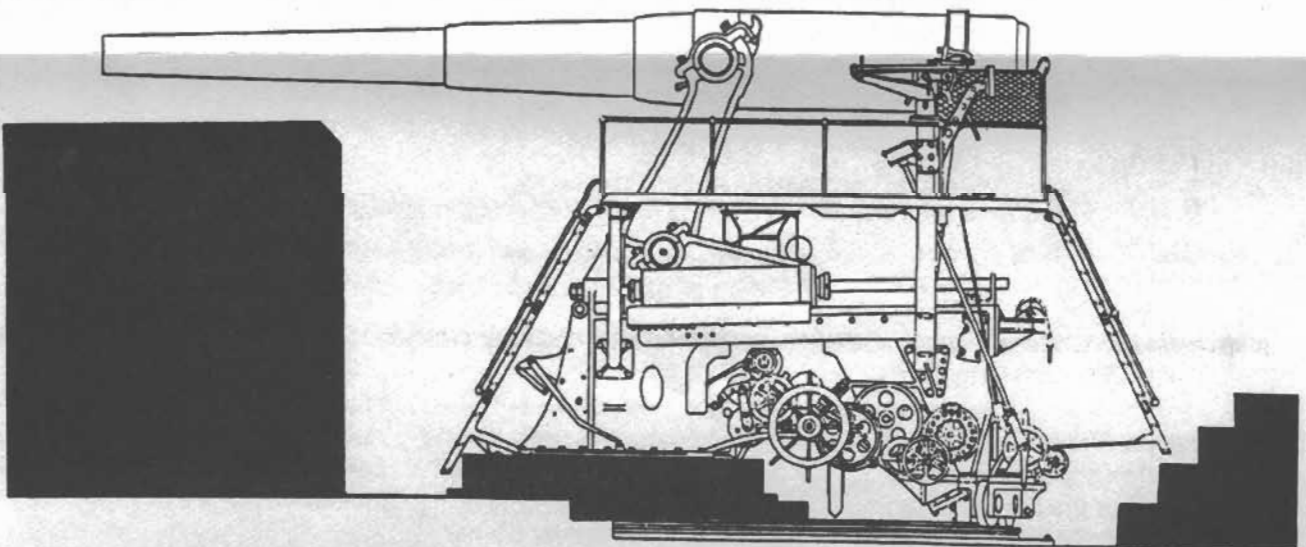
Team work and timing were essential to the successful operation of a 10-inch disappearing gun. Armor piercing shot and explosive shells were stored on the battery's ground floor. They were carried by an overhead trolley from the storerooms to a delivery table, loaded onto an electronic hoist and lifted to the upper level. Here each projectile was rolled onto a small vehicle known as a "shot cart", wheeled to the rear of the

gun and rammed into the open breach. Meanwhile, an explosive charge weighing about 200 pounds was carried from the battery's powder room to the gun. The charge was inserted directly behind the projectile, the breech closed, and the gun raised to firing position.

Aiming the gun was also a complicated process. From elevated decks, called "base end stations",

enemy vessels were sighted and the coordinates telephoned to the battery plotting room. From repeated sightings, plotting room personnel determined a vessel's speed and direction, predicting its future position. These coordinates were used by the battery's gunners to correctly aim the gun.

Signs posted in and around the battery will lead you on a self-guided tour of the facility.



One of four, 10-inch guns mounted on "disappearing" carriages at Battery Jasper.

END OF AN ERA

Like all weapon systems, the Endicott Batteries ultimately became obsolete. Improved weaponry aboard ships, combined with the threat of air attack, neutralized the guns' effectiveness.

During World War II, the batteries were used as a base for smaller, rapid firing, 90 mm and 155 mm guns designed to defend the harbor from attacks by fast moving torpedo boats. As the war progressed new

covered batteries were constructed on Sullivan's Island but the war ended before they came into use. One of these, known as Construction 230, stands immediately east of Battery Jasper, its grassy knoll now crowned with a modern naval electronic tracking station.

Few of the Endicott System guns survive. Examples of a 4.7 inch Armstrong Rapid Fire gun and a 3 inch Rapid Fire gun may be seen inside Fort Moultrie.

Today only the black concrete batteries on which the guns were mounted exist to remind us of the system that defended America's coastline from the Spanish-American War through World War II.

Battery Jasper is administrated as part of Fort Sumter National Monument by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent whose address is 1214 Middle street, Sullivan's Island SC 29482 is in immediate charge.